

Meeting Notes
NORTH DELTA IMPROVEMENTS GROUP MEETING
Wednesday, December 14, 2005
1:30-3:30 p.m. at Jones & Stokes (2600 V Street)

ATTENDANCE LIST:

Cosio, Gilbert	MBK Engineers
Crouch, Craig	Sacramento County Water Agency
Elliott, Chris	Jones & Stokes
Eusuff, Zaffar	California Department of Water Resources (DWR), North Delta
Fiack, Linda	Delta Protection Commission (DPC)
Hoppe, Walt	Point Pleasant
Kirkham, Bill	Area resident
Knittweis, Gwen	DWR, North Delta
Kreinberg, Grant	Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency
Martin, Sara	Jones & Stokes
Mello, Steve	Reclamation District 563
Mraz, David	DWR
Ray, Dan	DWR, North Delta
Simons, Rachel	East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)
Van Loben Sels, Topper	North Delta Water Agency and DPC
Whitener, Keith	TNC
Wilson, Daniel	DPC

HANDOUTS

- Meeting Agenda
- Meeting Notes from the October 19, 2005 meeting
- North Delta EIR Project Description Brief
- North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Potential Implementation Strategies
- Estimate of flood damages in the North Delta area

ACTION ITEMS

Action Items are notated with an “AI” in the margins of the notes and italicized text.

1. INTRODUCTIONS – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Gwen Knittweis called the meeting to order, wished everyone happy holidays, and facilitated a round of introductions. Ms. Knittweis then asked for any comments on the previous NDIG meeting’s minutes and said she would accept comments via e-mail over the next week. Steve Mello mentioned that he had spoken with Ms. Knittweis after the last NDIG meeting regarding flood damage cost estimates, and wanted added to the record that in 1997, all the power poles and telephone lines were lost on Tyler Island. He suggested DWR add those costs, as well as the Corps’ recovery costs, to their estimate. Ms. Knittweis thanked Mr. Mello, and said that DWR is still refining their flood damage cost estimates.

2. EIR PREPARATION AND UPDATE – Chris Elliott, Jones & Stokes

Project Description

Chris Elliott directed the group’s attention to the EIR brief. The project team has in the past spoken in broad terms about the potential alternatives and the way they may be grouped for analysis in the

EIR. The brief was developed with excerpted text from the first chapters of the EIR to describe the approach and framework for the project elements and alternatives and to ensure step-by-step stakeholder support and understanding. It includes Chapter 1 of the EIR almost in its entirety (except for the detailed descriptions of related projects), and a “skeletonized version” of Chapter 2. It is being presented to the NDIG to give the group the opportunity to decide if there are any fatal flaws or gross omissions. Mr. Elliott asked the key question: After reading the EIR brief, is the North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Project a project you can support?

AI-1 Mr. Mello asked if any comments were received on the project after the notice of intent (NOI) was filed. Mr. Elliott answered that yes, several comment letters were received, and comments were also taken at two public workshops held by the outreach consultant. All comments are available in the scoping report. *Ms. Knittweis said she would send the scoping report out via e-mail to the North Delta reflector.*

Mr. Elliott then took the group through a short history of the project, including how both the NDIG and North Delta Agency Team (NDAT) have guided project design, which is described in the EIR brief. He explained that the alternatives will be presented in two “Groups”. Each Group targets particular elements of the project purpose and need. Group 1 elements are located primarily on McCormack-Williamson Tract and would function to control flow through the island while providing ecosystem benefits. Group 2 elements focus mainly on Staten Island actions as well as dredging on the Mokelumne River. Ms. Knittweis pointed out that grouping the project elements also allows for the implementation of certain project elements to get near-term benefits without having to fund the entire project. This approach will be built into the environmental documentation.

The three Group 1 alternatives are:

- **Alternative 1-A: Fluvial Process Optimization.** This alternative would minimize interference with natural processes. It facilitates controlled flow-through of McCormack-Williamson Tract during high stage combined with a scientific pilot action of breaching a levee to optimize fluvial processes. The southernmost portion of the tract would be open to tidal action.
- **Alternative 1-B: Seasonal Floodplain Optimization.** This alternative would maintain hydrologic control (i.e. no levee breach for fluvial processes). It facilitates controlled flow-through of McCormack-Williamson Tract during high stage combined with scientific pilot actions to maximize floodplain habitat to benefit fish species that spawn on the floodplain. This would be accomplished by allowing controlled flooding (with some tidal action to maintain water quality) during the wet season.
- **Alternative 1-C: Seasonal Floodplain Enhancement and Subsidence Reversal.** This alternative facilitates controlled flow-through of McCormack-Williamson Tract during high stage combined with scientific actions to create floodplain habitat (similar to but less than alternative 1-B), combined with an aggressive subsidence reversal demonstration project in the lowest area of the tract. This would be accomplished by allowing controlled flooding (with some tidal action to maintain water quality) during the wet season as well as sediment import.

Dredging is also being looked at as an element of all the Group 1 actions, as it may be needed to mitigate for downstream stage increases.

The Group 2 alternatives are:

- **Alternative 2-A: North Staten Detention.** This alternative would create a detention basin at the north end of Staten Island .
- **Alternative 2-B: West Staten Detention.** This alternative would create a detention basin on the upper west side of Staten Island. A setback levee would be built to allow for increased capacity through the North Fork Mokelumne River to the detention basin. Habitat restoration would be integrated with the construction of the setback levee.
- **Alternative 2-C: East Staten Detention.** This alternative would create a detention basin on the upper east side of Staten Island. A setback levee would be built to allow for increased capacity through the South Fork Mokelumne River to the detention basin. Habitat restoration would be integrated with the construction of the setback levee.
- **Alternative 2-D: Dredging and Levee Raising.** This alternative would include dredging and levee raising on the South and North Forks of the Mokelumne River, with a maintenance dredging interval of approximately 5 years.

AI-2

Mr. Elliott concluded his summary of the EIR brief by directing the group to send any written comments on the brief to DWR staff. He then opened the floor to comments. Topper Van Loben Sels suggested *staff should verify which islands flooded after 1955* (Chapter 1, page 11). Mr. Wilson said he would like the EIR to describe the exact extent of dredging in the project area. Walt Hoppe saw in the brief that downstream effects of the project (i.e., raised stages) are addressed, but he didn't see any information on potential upstream stage increases. He mentioned that the National Flood Insurance Criteria showed that changes to Tyler Island, Glanville Tract, or McCormack-Williamson could cause hydraulic impacts on the other two. It also states that if changes are to be made to any of those islands, Sacramento County must be notified in order to evaluate the effect on the National Flood Insurance Criteria.

Other issues brought up by group members included:

- **Benefits for each group of alternatives.** Both Group 1 and Group 2 alternatives provide flood control, ecosystem restoration, and recreation benefits.
- **Document tiering.** The North Delta EIR is not formally tiering from the CALFED EIS/EIR—it will be a stand-alone document—yet it will be consistent with the CALFED EIS/EIR.
- **Related actions.** Related actions will be described as part of the cumulative impacts analysis in the EIR, and will define the extent of the North Delta planning universe. A list of projects that will be taken into consideration can be found on page 18 of Chapter 1 in the EIR brief. Related actions are those projects that are “reasonable and foreseeable” and could affect or be affected by the project. Mr. Hoppe reminded *Mr. Elliott that he said he would look into the definition of a “reasonable and foreseeable” project as it relates to Sacramento County’s potential actions in the South Sacramento area.*
- **Grizzly Slough.** All three Group 1 alternatives include actions on Grizzly Slough. DWR has owned the Grizzly Slough property for a while, and as a part of this project, DWR intends to breach a levee on the slough as a starter channel into floodplain habitat. The Grizzly Slough element would not only provide great ecosystem benefits and help rebuild food chains for the

AI-3

Delta Smelt, but it is also an ideal borrow site for construction of the wildlife-friendly levees and the KCRA tower ring levee on McCormack-Williamson Tract.

Discussion then turned to increased conveyance through the project area. Mr. Van Loben Sels strongly feels that increased conveyance is the key for flood control in the North Delta area. Ms. Knittweis said that Alternative 2-D, which focuses on dredging and levee-raising, is a stand-alone alternative and may even be the most viable of all the group 2 alternatives. Mr. Van Loben Sels said he would like the project team to look into levee setbacks and flattening the slope of levees in addition to dredging and levee-raising—anything that is cost-effective and increases conveyance. Mr. Mello said that levee-raising actions could incorporate flattening the waterside slope of the levees fairly cheaply. Mr. Wilson cautioned the project team against using the term “levee-raising,” as it for some connotes increased stages. There was consensus among the group that the name of alternative 2-D should be changed to “Dredging and Levee Modifications” and be broadened to include levee setbacks and levee flattening.

Mr. Van Loben Sels said he would also like to see bridge modification as a component of Alternative 2-D. Ms. Knittweis explained that the only reason bridge modification is included in Alternatives 2-A, 2-B, and 2-C is because construction of the setback levees and/or weirs would occur at the bridge sites and require the bridges to be redesigned. The hydraulic modeling showed that bridges were not a hydraulic issue in the system. Mr. Wilson said he believes that if the model shows the Millers Ferry Bridge as a non-issue, it proves the model is wrong. He measured a 1.2 foot gradient difference in stage upstream and downstream of the bridge during the 1997 flood, and that was without any boats stacked against the bridge. The group came to a consensus to include optional bridge modifications to Alternative 2-D.

- AI-4 *Mr. Elliott suggested holding an “Alternative 2-D meeting” between DWR, Jones & Stokes, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Mello, and Mr. Van Loben Sels to discuss modifications to the alternative. Ms.*
- AI-5 *Knittweis said she would look into performing some modeling runs on the new alternative component ideas.*

Gil Cosio suggested working downstream to upstream for implementation of project components. Dan Ray agreed that that would be a logical sequencing.

Bill Kirkham said he would like a discussion on the Aikens decision included in the introduction to the EIR.

Strategy for marina recommendations

Mr. Elliott mentioned that the project team had previously discussed marina relocation as a potential project alternative. However, he explained that marina relocation or closure is no longer under consideration because neither option directly addresses the purpose and objectives of the project, as it more closely treats a symptom of the surge effect rather than the cause (uncontrolled flow) and does not directly lower stage or increase capacity in a substantial way. Also, no readily identifiable opportunity sites for relocation have emerged as viable or suitable. The EIR will recommend that actions to address the marinas be further evaluated for potential to incrementally reduce flood risk. Specifically, a special study to evaluate boating facility needs in terms of type, capacity, location, amenities, and recommended alternatives for the Walnut Grove area should be commissioned to build on work completed under the Delta Protection Commission in 2005.

Mr. Van Loben Sels pointed out that The Nature Conservancy owns some land that could accommodate a relocation of the Wimpy's marina, and that the west levee on Dead Horse Island could be built up to keep the Walnut Grove marina from getting sucked into the island. Mr. Wilson requested that the strongest language possible be used in the EIR to explain that marinas and/or boats breaking away during flood events is an issue in the North Delta area.

Overall EIR Schedule

Mr. Elliott offered the group an updated schedule. The project team hopes to complete an administrative draft EIR in February, and to release a public version later in the spring.

3. BEACH-STONE LAKES AND POINT PLEASANT FLOOD CONTROL STAKEHOLDER FORUM UPDATE – Craig Crouch, Sacramento County DWR

Mr. Crouch informed the group that the Beach-Stone Lakes and Point Pleasant Flood Control Stakeholder Forum (Forum) planning process will take longer than previously thought—it should conclude a couple of months beyond the original March end date. The current news from the Forum is that they are now looking at constructing a dam on the Cosumnes River at the Sacramento County/Amador County line. The Corps has already analyzed this site for a dam, and the Forum's idea is to construct a dry dam sized to take the peak off of large flood events. He also said that the Forum is aware that any dam on the Cosumnes may be a non-starter.

4. GRIZZLY SLOUGH ELEMENT REFINEMENT – Dan Ray, DWR

Mr. Ray gave a short PowerPoint presentation on DWR's plans for restoration on Grizzly Slough. The Grizzly Slough Property is a 489-acre parcel. The property is within the Cosumnes River Watershed and is located in Sacramento County approximately two miles northeast of the town of Thornton. New Hope road borders it to the south and Grizzly Slough and Bear Slough meet at its northern tip and form the east, and west boundaries. DWR owns the parcel, and after restoration activities are complete, it would be managed as part of the Cosumnes River Preserve.

Over the years, most of the Grizzly Slough parcel has been managed as agriculture, with some of the land preserved for habitat. DWR plans to restore it as a part of the North Delta project for wildlife and fish, as well as to generate some borrow material for the wildlife-friendly levees on McCormack-Williamson Tract. As much as 648,000 cubic yards of borrow is available for excavation at the site, and its inclusion in the North Delta project adds significantly to the habitat values of the project.

In 2002, DWR received funding from the CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program to look at ways to restore the Grizzly Slough property, through bringing flood flows and sediment back through the area. Restoration of Grizzly Slough has since been merged with the North Delta project, since it is within the project area and its excess of sediment is complementary to the need for borrow to undertake restoration on McCormack-Williamson Tract.

There are currently three alternatives under consideration for Grizzly Slough restoration, with varying intensities of action. The "minimum action alternative" includes levee breaches into the Grizzly Slough property from Dry Creek/Bear Slough and Grizzly Slough, levee removal on the Cosumnes River so water can exit the floodplain, and a levee to protect New Hope Road. Under the minimum action alternative, it is hoped that a channel flowing north from the Dry Creek/Bear

Slough levee breach would form naturally via headcutting, and would receive flow every two years.

The “intermediate action alternative” includes the actions listed above, with levee removal at the Dry Creek/Bear Slough site, an excavated starter channel to recreate the Dry Creek channel on the floodplain, and a potential constriction on Bear Slough to force flow into the new channel. This action assumes no lowering would be needed to achieve the desired inundation frequency and wetness on the floodplain.

The greatest intervention alternative assumes that lowering of the floodplain would be needed to ensure the desired inundation frequency and wetness. Recreation of the Dry Creek channel on the floodplain would include lowering the swale approximately 5 feet to ensure flows every 2 years.

Mr. Hoppe expressed concern that the restoration plans for Grizzly Slough may be counterproductive to the flooding problems in the area—if the property is allowed to flood early in the rainy season, then the storage value of the floodplain will already be used when peak flood flows hit. Ms. Knittweis said that analysis shows the area as currently experiencing flood events every two to three years. Mr. Hoppe disagreed—he doesn’t believe the area floods that often. Mr. Wilson pointed out that at any rate, opening up the floodplain would dissipate any surge effects.

5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY – Gwen Knittweis, DWR

Ms. Knittweis explained that the project team has been looking at the long-term vision for the North Delta project, including funding sources, ownership, and management of the completed project. On the current forefront is strategizing for funding and implementation. The North Delta project was dropped from the CBDA 10-Year Action Plan; the implication being that the CALFED agencies have reduced their support for the project as a CALFED project under the Conveyance Program. The project is still considered a CALFED action, however, and is still covered by the CALFED Record of Decision. The project team plans to continue managing the North Delta program under Conveyance, with several options for future implementation. These options are:

- Continue the project as a DWR project. Ideas include:
 - Find PL 108-361 nexus with USACE to get Federal sponsorship/funding.
 - Put forward as a Delta Risk Management Strategy (DRMS) pilot project.
- Get the project reclassified as a CALFED Levees Program project. Ideas include:
 - Get the North Delta project mentioned as a priority in law, possibly as part of DWR legislation going forward to continue existing Levees Program.
 - Find PL 108-361 nexus with USACE for funding.
 - Put forward as a DRMS pilot project.
- Get the project reclassified as a CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program project. Ideas include:
 - Find strong DFG, NOAA, and FWS advocates.
- Have a Reclamation District or other entity take over. Ideas include:
 - Building a Cosumnes River Preserve nexus—asking DFG or BLM to take the lead.

Ms. Knittweis said that DWR is currently lining up to submit a letter of intent to the Corps to apply for PL 108-361 funding. PL 108-361 is federal legislation that provides funds for Delta levee

AI-6 restoration projects. USACE staff is currently developing criteria for disbursement of that funding, however Ms. Knittweis said that DWR is not interested in being the local sponsor for this endeavor, and Steve Mello said Reclamation District 563 might be interested in stepping into that role. *Ms. Knittweis said she would invite a representative from the Corps to make a presentation about PL 108-361 at the next NDIG meeting.*

The DRMS is a CALFED effort organized to analyze the risks associated with Delta levee failures to every island, the water supply system, wildlife, and habitat. It is also intended to identify who benefits from what in the Delta. Through this study, CALFED hopes to be able to identify beneficiaries who should contribute funding for maintenance of Delta infrastructure. The target date for the DRMS draft report is June 2007.

Ms. Knittweis then covered a couple of additional items not included in the agenda. First, she thanked the stakeholders for their flood damages estimates—it helped DWR tremendously with their cost/benefit calculations. She said that DWR would definitely like to work some more with local landowners/stakeholders on refining these estimates.

AI-7 She also announced that Mr. Eusuff has been polishing up the hydraulic modeling technical appendix—he has changed the units to feet and has shortened the timeframe of the graphs. Gilbert Cosio requested that the timeframe be shortened even more, to a 10-day timeframe as opposed to a 3-month timeframe. *Ms. Knittweis agreed to provide additional graphs with 10-day timeframes in the technical appendix.*

6. NEXT MEETING

The next NDIG meeting was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, January 18. Mr. Ray also announced that he will be leaving the North Delta team for a promotion within DWR. He will be working in the Flood Management division in compliance and regulatory approval.